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SECOND
REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE
OF
THE SOCIETY
FOR THE
MITIGATION AND GRADUAL ABOLITION
OF SLAVERY
THROUGHOUT THE BRITISH DOMINIONS.

READ AT THE GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY HELD ON
THE 30th DAY OF APRIL, 1825.

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1825.

ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

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THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER,

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*At a general Meeting of the SOCIETY, held at the
Freemasons' Hall, on Saturday the 30th of
April, 1825;*

PRESENT :

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER,

THE PATRON AND PRESIDENT,

In the Chair;

Earls Grosvenor, Nugent, and Euston; Viscount Milton; Lord Calthorpe; Hon. F. Calthorpe, M. P.; Hon. A. Calthorpe, M. P.; Hon. Captain Dundas; Hon. J. Shore; Hon. B. Noel; Sir T. Baring, Bart. M. P.; Sir J. Sebright, Bart. M. P.; Sir Thomas Esmonde; H. Brougham, Esq. M. P.; T. F. Buxton, Esq. M. P.; John Bennet, Esq. M. P.; James Cropper, Esq.; P. Corbett, Esq. M. P.; T. Denman, Esq. M. P.; W. Evans, Esq. M. P.; John Gurney, Esq.; S. Lushington, Esq. LL.D., M. P.; H. Maxwell, Esq. M. P.; Richard Martin, Esq. M. P.; D. O'Connell, Esq.; Pryse Pryse, Esq. M. P.; Spencer Percival, Esq.; T. S. Rice, Esq. M. P.; W. Smith, Esq. M. P.; James Stephen, Esq.; D. Sykes, Esq. M. P.; W. W. Whitmore, Esq. M. P.; W. W. C. Wilson, Esq. M. P.; W. Wilberforce, Jun. Esq.; &c.; with a most numerous attendance of the Subscribers and Friends of the Society.

*The REPORT of the Committee having been read, it was moved
by Lord Calthorpe, and seconded by Viscount Milton, and
unanimously*

Resolved,

That the Report, which has now been read, be received, and that it be printed and circulated under the revision of the Committee; and that the best thanks of this Meeting be given to the Committee for their past services, and that they be requested to continue the same.

*It was moved by William Smith, Esq. M. P.; and seconded by
T. Fowell Buxton, Esq. M. P.; and unanimously*

Resolved,

That this Society are anxious to express their deep sense of the misfortune they have sustained in the retirement from public life of their late revered leader, Mr. Wilberforce, and are earnest to discharge, in the most solemn and public manner, the imperative duty of offering the respectful tribute of their warmest and most grateful acknowledgments to that distinguished advocate of the just claims of humanity, for the invaluable services he has rendered to the oppressed natives of an entire quarter of the globe;—That in estimating his merit, and their own obligations, the Society feel it incumbent on them to recollect and to commemorate, that, although eminently endowed with the talents requisite to ensure his own individual advancement, and in circumstances highly favourable to its attainment, yet with a self-devotion of the most rare and unrivalled description, he deliberately sacrificed the most brilliant prospects of political distinction at the shrine of justice and humanity; and that, to the opportunity of mixing on equal terms among the statesmen of Europe, he preferred the steady pursuit of extended usefulness, in a path which led, not to the acquisition of wealth or power, but to the alleviation of human misery, and the unwearied promotion of the highest interests of man;—That while the Society recognize with affectionate gratitude the motives, equally pure and generous, which led to so noble a choice, they must also express their admiration of the ardent zeal, the undeviating steadiness, the undaunted courage, and the inflexible perseverance with which he maintained a severe, protracted, and often discouraging contest, at the conclusion of which he attained the never-fading glory of freeing his native land from her foulest stain—“the traffic in man,”—and of commencing the warfare against colonial bondage, having thus conferred on Britain an inestimable benefit, and established for himself an irresistible claim to the perpetual esteem and gratitude, not only of his country, but of the whole human kind.

It was moved by Henry Brougham, Esq. M. P.; and seconded by Thomas Denman, Esq. M. P.; and unanimously

Resolved,

That this Meeting feel themselves called upon to express their deep regret and disappointment, that so little progress should hitherto have been made, in carrying into effect the benevolent intentions of his Majesty's Government, the unanimous resolutions of Parliament, and the wishes and prayers of the Nation at large, for the mitigation and eventual extinction of Colonial Slavery;—That the threats of determined resistance, on the part of the Colonists, to the proposed measures of reform, appear to destroy all rational hope of relieving their bondsmen from the evils which press upon them, except by the direct interference of the supreme Legislature;—That Parliament, therefore, they trust, may be induced, without further delay, to enact and enforce such measures as are requisite for effectually meliorating the condition of the Slave-population throughout the British Dominions, and for raising “them to a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects.”

It was moved by W. W. Whitmore, Esq. M. P.; and seconded by D. Sykes, Esq. M. P.; and unanimously

Resolved,

That, deeply convinced of the moral guilt as well as of the political inexpediency of Colonial Slavery, this Meeting further laments the continuance of those commercial regulations, which, by imposing a much higher duty on Sugar the produce of free labour, than on Sugar grown by Slaves, force the latter into consumption, in this country, almost to the exclusion of the former:—That in thus giving a large bonus to the holders of Slaves in their competition with free labour, this country is pursuing a course, which, while it is at variance with all just maxims of commercial policy, powerfully and fatally tends to aggravate the miseries of the Slave, and to perpetuate the evils of colonial bondage;—and that, therefore, they earnestly recommend to all the friends of their cause, to employ their best exertions to put an end to a state of things which makes the

people of this country the real and efficient, though reluctant, upholders of that system of Slavery which they unequivocally reprobate as immoral and unjust, as inconsistent with the principles of British law, and highly injurious to the national interests.

It was moved by Stephen Lushington, Esq. LL.D., M. P.; and seconded by D. O'Connell, Esq.; and unanimously

Resolved,

That it be most earnestly recommended to the friends of this Society, in all parts of the United Kingdom, to employ their strenuous efforts in forming Anti-slavery Associations, for the purpose of diffusing information respecting the state of slavery; of exciting and keeping alive a feeling of strong interest in the unhappy lot of our colonial bondsmen, and of producing a suitable impression among all classes, and especially among the young, of the paramount obligations attaching to us as men, as Britons, and as Christians, to leave no means unattempted for alleviating their condition, and for raising them from their present state of mental darkness and brutish subjection, to light, liberty, and the hope of the Gospel.

It was moved by Sir John Sebright, Bart. M. P.; and seconded by Henry Maxwell, Esq. M. P.; and unanimously

Resolved,

That the most cordial acknowledgments of this Meeting be respectfully presented to the Patron and President of this Society, his Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, for his zealous and undeviating support of the Society's objects; for the honour and benefit of his distinguished patronage; and for the ability and condescension with which he has filled the chair on the present occasion.

SECOND REPORT,

&c. &c.

SINCE the last Meeting of the Society, the Committee are concerned to state, that little or nothing has occurred which affords any satisfactory indication of progress in the great work for which the Society has been instituted; *the Mitigation and gradual Abolition of Slavery in the British Dominions*. In the colony of Trinidad, indeed, an Order of his Majesty in Council, containing many salutary regulations, though greatly defective in some important respects, has been promulgated. Against the imposition of this Order, the White planters of the island have universally and strenuously remonstrated; alleging that it was pregnant with inevitable ruin to all their interests. "We have read," they say, "with grief and dismay, the Order in Council declared to be intended for the improvement of the condition of the Slaves in the Colonies;" and they gave it as their solemn conviction, that "the execution of its whole provisions will inevitably prove ruinous to the property of the Master, injurious and demoralizing to the Slave, peculiarly hazardous to the lives of the free Coloured inhabitants, and totally subversive of our gracious Sovereign's benign intentions." And "in order to avert that catastrophe which must otherwise involve every class in this colony in one common ruin;" they earnestly implored the Governor to stay the promulgation and execution of the Order. The Governor's instructions, however, were peremptory; and in June

1824, the order was duly promulgated, and became the law of the island.—A committee of planters, however, was appointed to frame a Memorial to the King in Council. And it appears by the Trinidad Gazette of August, 1824, that a paper of "remarks" was prepared, at the same time, for the purpose of being forwarded to certain persons in London, "supposed from their situation and influence to have the means of confidential communication with his Majesty's Ministers; and though these remarks are not presented as an official report from the committee, yet they are understood to speak the sentiments of its leading members." The Order in Council, they assert, "has made an entire revolution in the system under which Slaves were heretofore managed and governed." Changes, they say, "are always to be deprecated, especially in a Slave Colony, where the whole of the labouring population are deprived of their natural rights; and nothing but the force of habit, and a brutish indistinct idea of the superiority and fixed power of their masters, keep them in awe and subjection." One great source of discomfort to the Slave is stated to be the change produced by the Order in Council in the *old mode* of punishment, "so well established, recognized, and understood by the Slave;" (alluding of course to the abolition of flogging as it respects the women, and of the driving whip as it respects both sexes). "By those," they remark, "who have most considered the subject in this colony, the use of the whip is believed to be identified with the existence of Slavery." The attempt, on the part of the Colonial Government, to substitute new and different modes of coercion for that of the cartwhip, they regard as an admission that Slaves cannot be expected to work without fear of punishment;— "an admission," it is added, "hardly worth the trouble of noticing, were it not that the elementary principles of Slavery appear at present almost unknown in England, where the popular arguments urged by the philanthropists are mostly deduced from, and applicable only to, man in a state of freedom. Under these

circumstances, they ask, " can any cheerful co-operation be expected from the harassed and irritated master to promote the moral improvement of the Slaves ? It may be said without fear of contradiction, that every such feeling is at this moment extinct in the colony. The lower order of slave-owners are racking their inventions to devise modes of punishment, within the letter of the proclamation, to compel their Negroes to perform those services on which their means of subsistence entirely depends : whilst the higher classes see, with dismay and indignation, that the established and rational power, which upheld discipline and order, has been withdrawn, to be replaced only by galling and ridiculous substitutes which must end by demoralizing the Slaves, if not previously productive of some wretched catastrophe. Instead, therefore, of meditating schemes of improvement, their minds are intently bent upon withdrawing, at the earliest possible opportunity, from so ungrateful a scene." In the mean time, they tell us, that such is the state of feeling produced by this hateful order that " no offence can be forgiven as before ; recognized power can venture to be liberal and magnanimous : disputed authority must necessarily be jealous and severe. What a scene does this not open ! "

Now let it not for one moment be forgotten, that these things are said, of the West Indians and their system, not by your Committee, not by any enemy of slavery, but by West Indians themselves. They appear in the Gazette of Trinidad, and are reprinted with approbation in the Gazette of Jamaica ; and they are declared to express the sentiments of a Committee of Planters ;—of men who thoroughly comprehend the system they desire to uphold, and who are driven, by their alarms, to disclose those truths which, on ordinary occasions, they are anxious to conceal or palliate.

They accuse the philanthropists, it is true, of ignorance of the elementary principles of Slavery : and yet, wherein has *their* view of it differed from that which the fears of the planters have now extorted from them ?

The friends of emancipation have uniformly maintained, what the planters now reluctantly admit, that the whip is identified with Slavery; that it is by its infliction, or the dread of its infliction, that the Slaves are alone made to work; and that these Slaves are moreover deprived of their natural rights, and reduced to a state of brutish subjection to their masters. All this has been strenuously asserted over and over again by the philanthropists, and as strenuously denied by the advocates of the West-Indian system; by whom, indeed, it has, on various occasions, been pronounced a base and malignant calumny. Even so high and respectable an authority as Mr. Ellis, the Chairman of the West-Indian body, only about two years ago deliberately made the following statement with respect to what is commonly termed the driving system:—"I do not believe, however confidently it may have been asserted, that the whip is used as a stimulant to labour. I believe it will be found that the whip is generally placed in the hands of the driver, more as a badge of authority than as an instrument of coercion. It is, in fact, considered at present only as a symbol of office." How completely Mr. Ellis, and other humane and benevolent proprietors in this country, have been kept in the dark on this subject, by their servants and correspondents abroad, is apparent from the Trinidad remonstrance. In the minds of the resident planters of Trinidad the use of the whip is believed to be identified with the existence of Slavery. They have therefore read "with grief and dismay" an Order which puts down that instrument as a stimulant to labour, and forbids them to cartwhip females. They even lament over the demoralizing effect of this unhappy prohibition, by which the good old, established, and, by the Slave, well understood mode of punishment is abrogated, and an entire revolution effected in the system by which the Slaves have been heretofore governed.

The Committee are not now defending the regulations of the Order in Council, nor the substitutes for the whip proposed by some subsequent Order in Council which they

have not seen. These may be judicious or otherwise. The object they have now particularly in view, is to impress on the public mind what the nature of the colonial slave-system really is, as exhibited by the colonists themselves ;—a system in which brute force is avowed to be the governing impulse of the labouring population ; in which the whip is recognized as the grand motive to exertion ; and from which if the whip be withdrawn, an entire revolution must take place in it, attended, we are gravely told, with demoralization, insubordination, loss of property, and utter ruin. Without stopping to inquire in what respect the present moral state of the West-India Colonies will admit of deterioration from such a cause, it is obvious, on the shewing of these planters themselves, that the existing system is radically vicious, and must be changed. The worst conceptions of the most determined enemies of that system are realized in their own delineations of it ; which, while they leave no further doubt respecting its cruelty and guilt, enhance the obligation we are under to pursue it, by all lawful means, to its utter extermination.

In the various resolutions, remonstrances, and representations of the planters of Trinidad, the Committee rejoice to learn that the free Blacks and People of Colour, with few if any exceptions, have taken no share. They possess, it is said, a full half of the property of the island ; but they have not chosen to set themselves in opposition to the wishes of Parliament and of the public on this occasion. The civil degradations which they themselves are doomed to sustain are many and galling ; and the Committee believe they are sufficiently enlightened to have at length attained a just and settled conviction, that the Slavery of their colour is the real root of the evils they experience ; and that while that Slavery is perpetuated ;—while the Negro continues a “brutish” outcast from the pale of society ; “deprived of his natural rights ;” a mere beast of burden ; a mere instrument of profit ;—they who partake of his colour must of necessity partake of his debasement. *His* brand will cleave to *them* ; and neither wealth nor distinguished

talents, nor eminent moral worth, were they all to meet in one individual, will suffice to efface it.

It has been obviously, however, the wish of the White planters of Trinidad, that they should be thought in this country to enjoy the concurrence of the free People of Colour in their resistance to the reforms that have been proposed. In their petitions and memorials they have therefore designated themselves "the *free* inhabitants of the island of Trinidad." But it ought to be known that the parties who have subscribed their names, have been almost exclusively, if not entirely, Whites.

The remonstrants advert indeed, in one place, to the hazard of life to which the free Coloured inhabitants are exposed by the provisions of the Order in Council; and there is some ground for the remark. It refers to the provisions on the subject of the evidence of Slaves, which certainly do not appear to your Committee to have been framed on sound principles of legislation.

The Order in Council was passed for the express purpose of improving the condition of the Slaves. But, prior to the issuing of that Order, it is distinctly stated, in a minute of the Council of Trinidad of the 9th July, 1823, that, by a law in full force in that island, the testimony of Slaves was already admissible, *quantum valeat*. The Order in Council, however, imposes various restraints on this privilege: in that colony, the testimony of a Slave cannot now be received as formerly, unless some clergyman, or religious teacher, shall certify that such Slave understands the nature of an oath. But a still more injurious departure from the old law is to be found in that clause which provides, that slave testimony cannot be received in *any trial affecting the life of a WHITE MAN*. Why, in the first place, should the WHITE MEN be thus strangely protected, while the free People of Colour, possessing half the property of the island, are excluded from any such protection?—But can the exception be justified in either case? Certainly not. It is an exception wholly unknown to the Spanish law, and which is most injurious in its tendency.

As the law is now made to stand, should a White man commit murder in Trinidad, he possesses the same degree of immunity which he unfortunately has always enjoyed in the English islands; for if a thousand Slaves should have witnessed the fact, not one can now be heard in evidence against him. But this is not all the evil of the enactment. It is one of the provisions of the Order in Council, that, if a proprietor should be twice convicted of cruelty to a Slave, he shall be condemned to forfeit to the Crown all the Slaves he possesses. But to avert such a calamity, is it not now made the interest of the White proprietor, who has incurred the risk of conviction for a second offence of this description, to kill the Slave whom he may have cruelly treated; as in that case no slave-evidence could be admitted against him. This deviation from justice and good policy, could only have been admitted into the Order in Council from inadvertence; and the Committee trust it will not be suffered to continue there.

It was stated, in the last Report, to be the declared intention of his Majesty's Ministers, to extend the provisions of the Trinidad Order in Council to Demerara, Berbice, St. Lucia, Mauritius, and the Cape of Good Hope. This statement was confirmed by a letter of Earl Bathurst, to the Governor of Barbadoes, dated 26th July 1824, in which is the following passage:—"With respect to the Order in Council for meliorating the condition of the Slaves in Trinidad, similar provisions to those which are contained in that Order will be extended to Demerara and Essequibo, Berbice, St. Lucia, the Cape, and Mauritius, with such modifications as may be necessary to adapt them to the Dutch and French laws, which are respectively in force in those possessions."

The Committee had therefore hoped to have heard, ere now, that the declared intentions of his Majesty's Ministers had been actually carried into effect. This, however, they are sorry to learn, is not the case. The purpose appears

to be still unexecuted, although they have heard no reason assigned for the delay. They conclude that it has arisen from the opposition of the planters of those colonies to reforms which they, in common with the planters of Trinidad, profess to regard with dismay and horror, as a dangerous invasion of their most sacred rights.

On the concurrence of the slaveholders, the resident slaveholders especially, in any effective plan for controlling their own power, and for raising their wretched bondsmen in the scale of being, the Committee have never placed any strong reliance. Indeed, they are persuaded that the aversion which prevails, in the West Indies, to conferring upon Negroes the common rights of human nature, is too deep-rooted and general to be overcome except by the direct and authoritative interference of a higher power. The circumstances which, in this instance, have so unexpectedly delayed that interference, notwithstanding the pledge given to Parliament on the subject, during the last session, are the more to be deplored.

The spirit and temper which the Committee attribute to the colonists, have been the most clearly manifested in those colonies where the movement of the popular mind among them is the most free and unfettered. In Barbadoes, for example, two sessions have been consumed in debate and deliberation, and nothing has yet been done towards the reform of the Slave Code. The last session of their legislature opened with large promises, accompanied however with a spirit of violence and irritation even on the part of the professed reformers which afforded but slender hope of their fulfilment. The very mover of the proposed reforms seemed to feel that he could not expect a hearing, without the most unmeasured abuse of the Abolitionists and their motives. "The diabolical falsehoods and infamous aspersions of a few interested and designing hypocrites"—the Committee quote verbatim from his speech, as reported in the West-Indian newspapers of the day—"moving in terrific phalanx to the total annihilation of the White

inhabitants of the West Indies" marked them out in his opinion as a "vindictive crew," indulging "the abominable desire to cast headlong into the gulph of destruction, or endless misery, so large a portion of their fellow-creatures equally with themselves the followers of Christ." "No justification can they have in their hellish design but that which originated and is fostered in their own dark and interested souls." "Endeavour, however," he says to his co-legislators, "to tranquillize (as far as your natures will permit) those acute feelings which must agitate the breast of every enlightened and virtuous West-Indian, against that detestable Institution which, keenly and immovably bent upon your destruction, has, with consummate ingenuity, erected and set in motion against you a tremendous machinery, throwing out at each evolution misery and woe." "Soar above prejudice, and leave far behind you slanderers and vilifiers; steadily steering your country through the muddy waters of bitter calumny, and leaving her safely moored in the bright and tranquil shores of truth. Discharge your duty, forgetting every cause of irritation. Follow the mild dictates of your religion; shew to your accursed enemies that they, with their empty theories, carry blood and cruelty, risking not one iota of their ill-gotten wealth, while you in your practice extend, at the risk of your very existence, the real benefits of heaven-beaming philanthropy."—But all the violence of this vituperation was insufficient to secure the slightest degree of popular favour in Barbadoes, to the man who had dared to innovate, however sparingly, on the sacred institutions of its slave code. The speech was followed by upwards of two months of deliberation, in the Assembly, on the Bill which it introduced; but during this time the mover of it appears to have been assailed, out of doors, by every species of clamour and invective. He speaks of "the irritable working of parochial feeling which, in its effervescence, had disturbed him in the course of his duties," and exhorts the house to "guard, with scrupulous caution, against the influence of the feelings that are afloat without

doors, agitating the minds of those who do not, cannot, will not, understand the question they exclaim against." He then alludes to the threatening tone which had been employed to deter him from his duty, and to the martyrdom to which he might possibly be called by the hostility of his constituents.—And what produced all this rage and violence on the part of the people of Barbadoes? A proposal merely to modify some of those cruel and sanguinary laws which had so long been the disgrace of its statute book. Under the influence, doubtless, of this popular feeling, the proposed amelioration law, on leaving the Assembly, and proceeding to the Council, was found to be still so disfigured by severity, and so defective in its provisions of protection to the Slave, that the Council rejected it, as calculated to produce a more unfavourable impression of Barbadian humanity than if no change whatever had been attempted.

The points brought into discussion between these legislative bodies are not a little curious, and will also serve to convey some idea of the qualifications of the Barbadian Assembly for conducting the reformation which has been delegated to their wisdom and feeling. The points are such as these:—Whether persons, not proved to be Slaves, shall or shall not enjoy the privileges of freemen; whether the punishment to be inflicted by the master on the slave shall have any limitation, or no limitation; whether the mere attempt, on the part of a Slave, to strike any White person shall or shall not be a justification of that White person should he kill the Slave in return; whether the making of unfounded complaints by the slave against his master, shall be punished with more or with less of severity; whether a whip or a cat-o'-nine-tails shall be the future instrument of coercion for compelling the labour of the Slaves; whether any White, free Coloured or free Black person, who shall be guilty of the enormous crime of *intermixing with a Slave*, shall or shall not be subjected, by way of punishment, to the ignominy of having the evidence of Slaves gene-

rally admitted against him ; whether Sunday markets shall or shall not be abolished ; whether the heavy fine of 50*l.* on each act of manumission shall or shall not be continued ; with other questions of equally dubious and delicate application.

The Meeting will recollect the outrages which were last year perpetrated, in Barbadoes, by the lawless destruction of the Methodist Chapel at Bridgetown, and the expulsion from that island of the Missionary Shrewsbury. These outrages have been followed by others of a similar description. Mr. Rayner, another Missionary, went from St. Vincent's to Barbadoes : he applied in the first instance to the Governor for protection ; but his application was very coldly received, and no hope of effectual protection was afforded to him. Mr. Rayner, therefore, did not dare to land, on account of the threats of the leaders of the former mob ;—such is the language of the Wesleyan Missionary Society's Report. “ One zealous man,” it is there stated, “ sat on the shore a whole night, with a loaded pistol, to shoot him had he left the vessel. The vessel itself was menaced with an attack of boats, and was obliged to seek protection under the guns of a ship of war.” The congregation also, which Mr. Shrewsbury left behind him, and which continued to meet in a private house for the purposes of worship and mutual edification, were threatened with violence. The former mob announced their purpose of celebrating the anniversary of the destruction of the chapel, by razing the obnoxious house to the ground. This was prevented by the interference of the Governor and the Magistrates ; but the latter have forbidden any more meetings to be held. In short, the whole account which has been given to the public, by the Methodist Mission Society, proves the existence, in Barbadoes, of a state of disgraceful lawlessness, and a deep and settled hostility to the religious instruction of the Negro and Coloured population, of whom the Methodist congregation was chiefly composed.

That a similar feeling should be represented to prevail in

Demerara, where, the same Report tells us, a hostile spirit against Missions of every kind has continued to be manifested, will be no subject of surprize. In Jamaica also, a like spirit has shewn itself at different parochial meetings, where resolutions were agreed to, recommending the expulsion of missionaries. In the other West-India Colonies there appears considerably less hostility to missionary exertions ; and in some, they are even encouraged.

The proceedings of the Legislature of Jamaica have been no less instructive than those of the Barbadoes Assembly. On their meeting in November last, they began the session with professing their readiness to bestow the most serious attention on the propositions, transmitted by Government, for the improvement of the slave population. But the session has closed without their taking one efficient step towards that object. The propositions submitted to them appear to have been comprised in the Trinidad Order in Council, which Earl Bathurst had directed the Governor to lay before the Assembly, as the model of the desired reforms. The only measure of reform, however, which appears to have been introduced in consequence of this communication, was a bill "to enable Slaves to give evidence in certain cases of crime committed against Slaves, and of criminal attempts to excite rebellion and insurrection and of uttering seditious language." But even this Bill, though most jealously guarded, and extremely defective, in its provisions, was thrown out by a majority of thirty-four to one.

The most remarkable transaction in the proceedings of the Jamaica Assembly was the Report of a Secret Committee appointed to investigate the late disturbances. The grand object of the Report is to trace those disturbances to the discussions respecting slavery which had taken place in the British Parliament. The absurdity, however, of such a view of the subject is rendered sufficiently apparent, by the incessant renewal, in the colonial journals, of the very same discussions, and that in a style of the utmost inflammation.

One inference, however, may be drawn from this Report which was probably not intended by its framers; and that is, the extreme flimsiness of the grounds on which were built the alleged servile plots and conspiracies of the preceding year, for participating in which so many of the Slaves were tried, convicted, and executed.

On looking at the accounts of those trials, and comparing them with this Report of the Secret Committee, there will be found the strongest reasons for believing that a great part of these pretended plots was the base fabrication of interested and perjured witnesses. Several of the convictions and executions took place on the evidence of two slaves, Charles Mack and John Baptiste Corberand, whose evidence would have been wholly inadmissible in any matter, however insignificant, affecting a free person. Their evidence, moreover, was given under the strongest possible bias,—they were themselves accused of being concerned in the plot; and they not only secured their own lives by turning King's evidence, but they had the hope of reward before them should they succeed in convicting others. Much of their evidence also has since been proved to have been false; and the opinion which the Secret Committee themselves, after fully investigating the subject, were led to entertain of them, may be gathered from the following passage in their Report:—“The Committee feel it their duty to recommend to the house, that a message should be sent to his Grace the Governor, requesting that he would send off the island, Charles Mack and John Baptiste Corberand, as persons of a most dangerous character to remain at large in this colony; and that the house will make good any expense attendant on such a measure.” Thus, the very two slaves, on whose testimony so many of their fellow-creatures were thrust out of existence, and in favour of the credibility of whose testimony not one word is said in the Report, are themselves there represented as men of such desperate characters that the safety of the island required their removal, by a mere act of power unauthorised by law. Can we doubt

that men of such a character, especially when tempted by the hope of freedom or of reward, would readily affirm whatever would give them favour and importance in the eyes of their superiors, at a moment too of unnatural alarm and agitation; even if no circumstances had afterwards occurred to throw discredit on their evidence?

Now it was in consequence, be it remembered, of something which was alleged to have been said by these infamous persons, in the course of an extrajudicial examination, that the two respectable Men of Colour who are now in this country, Mr. Lescenes and Mr. Escoffery, British subjects, were, without a trial, or even a hearing; without any opportunity of inquiry, or of confronting or cross-examining their accusers, seized as conspirators against the public peace, torn from the bosom of their families, ruined in their circumstances, and exiled from their country. This atrocious act of oppression will speedily undergo the review of Parliament. The cause of the sufferers has been undertaken by one who is well known to want neither the will, nor the courage, nor the talent, to vindicate the innocent victims of lawless power.

It is a decisive presumption in favour of the impression, created in Jamaica, of the innocence of these exiled and outraged individuals, that no charge whatever is preferred against them in this Report of the Secret Committee; but that, on the contrary, although it was known that their cruel case had been brought under the cognizance of Parliament, the following tribute of approbation to the good conduct of the whole body of the free coloured population is there given without qualification, exception, or reserve. "The Committee cannot draw this Report to a conclusion without bestowing its meed of praise on the zeal and alacrity shewn by the regulars and militia throughout the disturbed districts, both by the Whites and free People of Colour. The conduct of the latter evinced a warm interest in the welfare of the colony, and every way identified them with those who are the most zealous promoters of its internal security."

The Committee cannot learn that any effective measures of reform have yet been adopted, in consequence of the recommendation of his Majesty, by any of the other Colonies except Tobago. In that island, containing a population of 14,000 slaves, the Legislature have, in one point, gone even beyond the provisions of the Trinidad Order in Council. They have admitted Slave-evidence in the very case in which the Order in Council has rejected it; namely, in the case of the wilful murder or mayem of a Slave by a White or free person. It is admitted, however, only in case no White or free person was present, or can be produced to prove the facts; and even then, there must be the concurrent testimony of two Slaves, unimpeached as to their credibility. Into the Tobago Act clauses are also introduced for securing the personal property of the Slaves; for abolishing Sunday markets and substituting Thursday; for allowing to the Slaves thirty-five week days in the year for their provision grounds; and for limiting arbitrary punishments to twenty stripes, and, if more than twelve are given, providing that it shall be in the presence of a free person besides the person who inflicts the punishment. These are undoubtedly improvements, though they fail far short of the recommendations of his Majesty.

With this single exception, the Committee are grieved to state, that they cannot discover that, during the past year, any enactments have been framed by the Colonial Legislatures which tend to the mitigation of Slavery.

What course his Majesty's Government may deem it right to pursue on this occasion, the Committee have no means of knowing. But it cannot be denied that the conduct of the Colonies has furnished that case of contumacy, which, in 1823, Mr. Canning distinctly stated would call for parliamentary interference. Of all the reforms which were then suggested, and which were admitted by the Government and the Parliament to be necessary, not one appears to have been as yet adopted, except in a single island, by any of the Colonies having Legislatures of their own. And even in those Colonies which are immediately

subject to the Crown, the attempt at reformation has been confined to **Trinidad** :—the resistance it has there had to encounter has been already adverted to.

It is impossible for the Committee to contemplate these facts without feelings of the deepest regret. It is true, they never anticipated the willing concurrence of the Colonies in any effective plans of reform ; and they therefore looked forward to no beneficial result from the mere recommendation of the subject to their attention.

Those who formerly censured their distrust of the favourable disposition of the colonial authorities must now be convinced that that distrust was well founded, and must now be prepared for the conclusion, at which the Committee have long arrived, that the authoritative interference of Parliament is imperiously called for, and cannot be withheld without a sacrifice of its most sacred obligations. Those parliamentary friends of our cause, therefore, who, on the occasion of the discussion referred to above, pledged themselves to move, if it should become necessary, the House of Commons on this subject, will now, without doubt, feel themselves called upon to act with the promptitude and decision which the emergency requires.

It is not, however, merely by the interference of Parliament, in the internal legislation of the Colonies, that the mitigation and final extinction of Slavery may be effected. The abolition of the West-Indian monopoly would tend, perhaps, even more certainly to that end.

That monopoly is at present supported, first, by a bounty of upwards of six shillings per cwt. on the export of refined sugar, and which necessarily raises the price, not only of all such sugar exported, but of all the sugar consumed at home, to the extent of the bounty ; and secondly, a protecting duty of ten shillings a cwt. more on East-Indian, than on West-Indian sugar : thus favouring sugar grown by slave labour, in preference to that grown by free labour, to the extent of about 50 per cent. on the cost of the article, and tending to exclude the latter from our consump-

tion, and to force us to consume the former. On coffee also, the West Indies have a protection of 28s. a cwt. Now, to say nothing at present of the degree in which prices are raised by the operation of the protecting duty, the cost of the West-Indian monopoly, arising from the sugar-bounty alone, may be estimated at about 1,200,000*l.* annually *. And it is this large sum, (in addition to whatever enhancement of price may be produced by the protecting duty,) paid by the people of this country to the growers of sugar, over and above what that sugar would otherwise cost, which does in fact chiefly maintain unimpaired and unreformed the wretched system of colonial bondage. The people of England are therefore the real upholders of Negro Slavery. Without their large contribution to its support, it could not fail to be rapidly mitigated, and eventually extinguished. It is absolutely vain, therefore, to be hoping to abolish Slavery, or to expect that by the vehemence of our speeches, or the force of mere parliamentary resolutions, or of royal recommendations, we shall be able to abate this evil, while we are extending to it such solid marks of our favour, and thus affording to it its great and principal means of support.

It is calculated that there are in the West Indies, about 1800 sugar plantations; among the proprietors of which

* This position has been questioned. It has been affirmed that the bounty, the extent of which is not denied, affects only the sugar which is exported. But such a statement can alone proceed from an entire ignorance of the facts of the case. The price of the sugar consumed in this country, and of that which is refined for exportation, is precisely the same in the sugar market. The bounty necessarily operates on the whole mass of sugar, as there cannot exist at the same moment, two prices of one article in the same market. The point however, if there could exist a doubt upon it, (though such a doubt cannot possibly exist in the mind of any commercial man,) is fully conceded by the West Indians themselves. Mr. George Hibbert, the agent of the island of Jamaica, in a letter to his constituents, dated 11th of March, 1824, and published in the Royal Gazette of Jamaica of the 1st May, 1824, distinctly states, that "*the advantage which we now enjoy in the principle and produce of calculating the drawback upon the export of refined sugar taken altogether, is little, if at all short of a gratuitous bounty of six shillings per hundred weight.*"

the twelve hundred thousand pounds which the people of this country are forced to pay for their sugars, over and above what the same sugars would cost them if the trade were free, is of course divided ; making, on the average, about *700l.* sterling annually to each proprietor; and this independently of the advantage, whatever it be, which he derives from the protecting duty. Now if it were proposed in Parliament to give to each of these 1800* West-Indian proprietors, pensions, varying in their amount from *500l.* to *5000l.* a year, according to the quantity of sugar which each might extract, by means of the cartwhip, from the labour of his Slaves ; and forming a total aggregate of one million two hundred thousand pounds, what reception would such a proposition meet with ? Would it be tolerated for a single moment ? And yet, wherein does the actual state of things differ substantially from the case which has been supposed, except that, in this last, the transaction would stand forth to the public view in all its flagrancy, while, in the other, it is more concealed from observation ; and that, in the one case, the money would be paid by the people into the Exchequer, before it went into the pockets of the sugar planters ; and that, in the other, it is paid to them through the grocers in the price of their sugars. The payment is not the less real on that account.

Now, it will not be alleged that the West Indians have any claim to levy such a contribution upon the people of this country for merits or services of their own. They are themselves sensible of this. They allege it to be necessary, not so much on their own account, as with a view to the well-being and comfort of their Slaves. And they have, on more occasions than one, been supported, in this mode of defending the existing arrangement, even by some of our public men. The consequence has been, that an objection has thus been raised, in the minds of many benevolent persons, to the abolition of the West-Indian monopoly,

* This number is said to be overrated by more than 200 : if so, the case here stated would be greatly strengthened.

and of the bounties and protecting duties by which it is maintained, on the ground that a depression in the price of slave-grown produce would tend to aggravate the misery of the Slaves, and to expose him to farther privations, and perhaps even to starvation itself.

As no notion can be more fundamentally erroneous than this, notwithstanding the zeal with which the West Indians and their friends, both in and out of Parliament, have laboured to propagate it, it seems of the very first importance that it should be calmly examined, and its fallacy exposed. The proposition which the Committee are prepared to maintain, is directly opposed to it: it is, "that whatever tends to raise the price of the slave-grown produce of our Colonies, tends in the same degree to rivet the chains, and to add to the labour and misery, of the Slave; while the depression of its price operates beneficially both in relaxing his bonds, abating his toil, and enlarging his comforts."

We have frequently been told by the colonial authorities, and particularly by the Assembly of Jamaica, that if the prices of produce should fall, the Slaves must starve. The same authorities have, however, assured us, that such is the favourable nature of their soil and climate, that the labour of a few days in the year is amply sufficient to provide the Slaves with the means of comfortable subsistence. The same view of the subject has been taken by every colonial writer, from Mr. Bryan Edwards to Mr. Foster Barham. They only vary a little with respect to the quantity of time which the Slave requires for this purpose; some stating it at seven days in the year, and others at twelve or fourteen. In conformity with these statements, the greatest number of days in the year (exclusive of Sundays) which, down to 1816, was allowed to the Slaves by law, in any of the islands, for cultivating the land allotted to them for their subsistence, was from fourteen to sixteen. And this small portion of time, it was affirmed in the evidence laid by the West-Indian party before the Privy Council and Parliament, not only enabled the Slaves generally to live in

comfort, but afforded many of them the means of procuring luxuries, and even of amassing wealth.

It is not the intention of the Committee at present to examine the accuracy of these positions. It is sufficient to know that the West-India laws had generally proceeded upon the principle, that (exclusive of Sunday) about fourteen days in the year, or a twenty-fifth part of the Slave's time, was quite sufficient for his comfortable subsistence. This principle has also been fully acted upon in practice. In Jamaica, for example, and in every other island where this course of allotting land and time to the Negroes is pursued, no regular allowance of food, with the exception of a few herrings, or a little salt fish, but in quantities so small as merely to serve as a seasoning to their food, is given to the Slaves. With this exception, they draw their food from the spot of ground allotted to them, and which is tilled by their own labour during the portion of time set apart by law for that purpose. In Jamaica, that time, which (exclusive of the Sunday) did not previously exceed sixteen days, was raised, in 1817, to twenty-six; and in Tobago has been raised by the new law to thirty-five in the year. It does not appear that any other colonies have as yet been equally liberal. There are some colonies, however, where, instead of allotting lands to the Slaves to be cultivated on their own account, the provision grounds are cultivated by the whole gang, and a weekly allowance of food is given to each Slave. In this case, no time during the week is allowed him by law.

Having premised thus much, it will be easier to understand clearly the operation of high and low prices of produce on the condition of the Slaves.

It will not be denied, in the first place, that a high price of the produce of Slave-labour must enhance the value of the Slave, and thus tend to obstruct his manumission. The willingness of a master voluntarily to manumit his Slave will necessarily be affected by the costliness of the sacrifice; and, if we suppose the redemption of the Slave to be accomplished by the savings of his own

industry, it is obvious that the difficulty of accomplishing it would be increased in proportion to the increase of his value.

This fact is curiously illustrated by a comparison of the progress of manumission in the colonies of Barbadoes and Demerara. The Slave population of each is nearly the same; but, owing to the superior fertility of the soil of Demerara, slave labour is there much more productive, and Slaves much more valuable, than in Barbadoes. Taking the period which elapsed from the 1st of January 1808 to the end of 1821, it appears, from the parliamentary returns, that, in Barbadoes, during those fourteen years, manumissions proceeded at the average rate of 125 in each year; whereas, in Demerara, they did not amount to more on the average than about twenty-seven in each year. In both colonies there is a heavy tax on manumissions.

It may perhaps be said, that if a high price of produce should have the effect of raising the value of the Slave, yet, as the value of his own produce would be proportionably enhanced, he would experience no disadvantage from that circumstance. Here, however, the miserable policy of colonial legislature interferes. The Slave is universally restrained by law, under heavy penalties, from cultivating, or vending, a single article of exportable produce; a single article, therefore, the price of which can be raised either by foreign demand, or by the effect of bounties and protecting duties.

But it is not in this indirect way only that a high price of produce operates to the disadvantage of the Slave. The effect of a high price of any article is uniformly to stimulate its increased production; while the effect of a glut, and of low prices, is necessarily to check its production. But, in our colonies, where the slave population cannot be augmented by importations, it is obviously impossible that production should be increased without adding to the labour of the Slave. An increase of the quan-

tity of sugar or coffee can only be obtained either by abridging the time allowed to the Slave for cultivating his own provision grounds, or by stimulating him to increased muscular exertion while working for his master. On the other hand, a low price of produce naturally leads to a contrary course ; to a husbanding of the strength of the Negroes, and to an enlargement of the time allowed them to cultivate their grounds.

These opposite tendencies of high and of low prices may be illustrated by a case which often finds its parallel in the West Indies. Let us suppose the case of A, the proprietor of a sugar plantation yielding annually 200 tons of sugar, and cultivated by 300 Slaves, who are so managed as just to maintain their numbers. He enters into a contract with B, at a time when sugars are averaging a gross price of 30*l.* a ton, to let to him his estate, on lease for ten years, at a rent of 1000*l.* per annum. The other charges amount to 20*l.* per ton, or 4000*l.* ; and therefore leave to B. a net income in each year of 1000*l.*, or 5*l.* per ton. It further forms part of their agreement, that the plantation, with its Slaves, cattle, works, buildings, and utensils, should be fairly appraised at the commencement of the lease, and should again be fairly re-appraised at its termination ; and that, if the value should be diminished in the interval, the amount of the deterioration should be made good by B ; but that if it should be improved he should receive the value of that improvement.

Now, let it be supposed that, under these circumstances, B should wish to add to his income by increasing his crop from 200 to 250 tons of sugar. The addition of fifty tons, the prices remaining the same, would increase the gross produce from 6000*l.* to 7,500*l.*, and the rent and charges being deducted would afford him in the first instance an increase of his net income. But then it is obvious, that in order to effect this increase of income, he must also increase, by one-fourth, the ordinary labour of

the Slaves and cattle ; and if he should see reason to estimate their wear and tear, arising from the heavier pressure of this new exaction of labour, at the sum he had added to his income, he would, in that case, have no temptation to overwork his Slaves ; for, though he would gain by an addition of fifty tons of sugar, yet if he should have to refund that sum or more, in order to compensate to A the diminished value of his property, he would probably feel it to be his wisest and safest plan, in such circumstances, not to attempt to increase his crops at the certain expense which he must incur by doing so.

But, supposing that the gross price of sugar should rise from $30l.$ to $50l.$ a ton, then how would the case stand ? $4,600l.$ would at once be added to his income by the sale of his 200 tons of sugar ; and if, dreading that these good times might be of short duration, he should resolve, by a farther exaction of labour, to add fifty tons to his crop, though at an expense of slaves and cattle which might amount even to $1000l.$, it would clearly be his interest to do so. The additional fifty tons, after supplying the means of compensating for this sacrifice of human life and of property, would still leave him a large surplus. The temptation therefore to overdrive the Slaves, would, in such a case, be exceedingly increased.

But if, instead of rising to $50l.$ a ton, sugars were to sink to $25l.$, then the proceeds would be barely sufficient to meet the rent and expenses of the estate ; and supposing B., in such a case, to endeavour to add to his income by extracting fifty additional tons of sugar from the Slaves, he would not derive, from this forced increase of produce, more than half the cost of life which it would occasion. In such a case, would it not be his clear and indubitable interest, since nothing could be gained by an increased sugar culture, rather to turn his attention to the improvement of the property ; and, instead of adding fifty tons of sugar to his crop by a process which must be attended with loss and not gain, to endeavour, by the raising of abundant food and by other means, to increase his stock

of Slaves and cattle, so that he might have a large claim to make on the proprietor for improvements. It would be utter folly in him to throw away the capital of the estate in unproductive labour, while, by husbanding and improving it, and by economizing his resources, he might prevent the ruin which must otherwise come upon him. And if he should pursue this wise course; if, instead of having added during the years of his lease, fifty tons of sugar annually to his already unproductive crop, at an expense of fifty or one hundred Slaves, for whom he would have ultimately to pay; he had rather diminished his sugar crop, while, by his care and humane attentions, he had added fifty or one hundred Negroes to the population of the estate, whose value he would have to receive, he would obviously be an immense gainer. Such would be naturally and almost necessarily the course of things prescribed by low prices. High prices, on the contrary, would have enabled him to gain largely by an opposite course; namely, by overworking and killing his Slaves.

But although the case which has now been stated of a lessee, may make the operation of high and low prices on the condition of the Slaves, considered as instruments of profit, more obvious; yet there is, in point of fact, nothing which really distinguishes the case of a lessee from that of a proprietor who occupies his own estate. If he can gain only 500*l.* by increasing his crop, while, in doing so, he sacrifices 500*l.* worth of Slaves and cattle, he will have little inducement to pursue such a course. But if, in consequence of high prices, he can gain, by the same sacrifice, four or five times its amount, the temptation then becomes very powerful; and it might operate even more injuriously in the case of a proprietor than in that of a lessee, as the former would not be liable to the same scrutiny, respecting the decrease of his Slaves, with the latter, and might therefore consult his mere interests with less risk of exposure.

A perfectly analogous effect is produced in this country, on the comfort and lives of post-horses, by any sudden

rise in the gains of posting in a particular district; more especially if a farther supply of horses can with difficulty be procured. A like effect, it is well known, takes place with respect to the wear and tear of manufacturing machinery, in consequence of an increased demand of the article it is employed in fabricating.

It is not the intention of the Committee to press this argument in any unfair or invidious manner. There may be proprietors of West-Indian estates who would rather lose largely by their Slaves than exact from them an undue degree of labour. Such cases, however, cannot be considered as affecting the general argument. The great mass of West-Indian proprietors are speculators, who have invested their money in West-Indian property solely with a view to gain, and who are necessarily guided in their conduct by the same commercial principles which operate in every other department of productive industry. Here, however, the instruments of production are sentient beings, reduced to the condition of mere machines; and it is not to be wondered at that in such circumstances they should share the common fate of other instruments of production, whether they be cattle or machinery. The guilt and discredit of such a revolting condition of human society belongs to the State which suffers it to exist, far more than to the individuals who administer it.

The Committee do not mean to argue that Slaves may not be wretchedly used, and cruelly oppressed, when prices are low, and their labour comparatively unproductive. It is not in human nature that the possession of such an uncontrolled despotic power as that which is possessed by the colonial master over his bondsman should not be abused. But what they mean to affirm, and what they think they have proved, is, that the tendency of low prices is to relieve the labour, and to promote the increase and emancipation, of the slave; while the tendency of high prices is to stimulate the master to fresh exactions, and to render the emancipation of the Slave more difficult.

The advocates of the West-Indian system argue that we may implicitly rely on the interest of the master for the well-being and preservation of the Slave, that Slave being his property. "It is so clearly his interest," they say, "to be humane, that you require no other guarantee." But, in the case of high prices, it has been shewn, that the master's pecuniary interest may be in direct opposition to the claims of humanity. It *then* may become his *interest* to exact from the Slave an increased quantity of labour, at the hazard, and even to the extensive destruction, of health and life.

But how does it happen, it may be asked, that, in the case of the West-Indian labourer, all the recognised principles of political economy should be thus strangely reversed? In this country, an increased demand for cotton manufactures, for example, causing of course an increase of price, produces the most beneficial results to the labourers employed in that branch of manufacture. How happens it then that an increase in the price of sugar does not produce, to the West-Indian labourer who cultivates it, the like advantages?

The cause of the difference is obvious: the one is a freeman, the other is a Slave. The increased demand in the case of the freeman produces an increase in the rate of his wages. In the case of the Slave, it may produce indeed a destructive increase in the rate of the labour exacted from him: but Slaves receive no wages; they therefore derive no benefit, but, on the contrary, an aggravation of their uncompensated toil, by the increased demand for the produce of their labour.

The free labourer, in like manner, may suffer from low prices, either by the diminished rate of his wages, or by his being thrown out of work. But what does the Slave suffer by being thrown out of work? What disadvantage can it be to him that the produce of his labour is not in demand, unless we can suppose the master to hinder him, on that account, from cultivating his provision grounds as

formerly, and to oblige him to sit down and starve in inaction during the time which the law allots to him for the raising of food.

The West Indians, it is true, assert, that, if prices should fall, the Slaves must starve; and this is, in particular, the language which has been held by the Assembly of Jamaica. But in what way are low prices to operate in producing this effect? The food of the field Slaves in that island is raised entirely by their own hands, on the portion of ground allotted to them for that purpose, and cultivated during that fragment of their time (about one thirteenth part of the whole) which is specifically assigned them by law. Is it, then, by depriving the Slaves of the land which had been set apart for their subsistence, and which the owner himself has now less temptation than ever to occupy, that starvation is to ensue? Or is it by depriving them, without any assignable object for so doing, of the scanty portion of time which the law allows them for cultivating their allotments? If not, how is it possible for them to starve? Low prices of sugar cannot make the land less fit than it was before to produce the food of the Negroes, or the Slaves less capable of tilling it, if only the time be continued to them. That, when prices are high and sugar-planting gainful, the planter may be tempted to violate the law, by abridging the time and land allowed to his Slaves, in order to enlarge his crops, is conceivable. But it is not conceivable that he should do so gratuitously, without any possible profit, and even when it is clearly contrary to his interest. The tendency of a low price of sugar is obviously to throw his inferior lands at least out of culture, and to induce him to direct a larger share both of land and labour to the growth of provisions, or of some other article of exportable produce than sugar;—and, whatever article may be substituted for it, the change must operate as a relief to the Slaves; the culture of sugar being by far the most oppressive branch of colonial husbandry.

Enough has been said to explain the grounds on which the Committee are disposed to regard the West-India

monopoly, and the bounties and protecting duties by which it is upheld, as eminently injurious to the Slave, and as aggravating by its effects the various hardships of his condition. It would not be difficult to strengthen this conclusion, to which the reasonings of the Committee have inevitably led them, by an appeal to facts which shew that the loss of slave life, in the different colonies, bears, if not an exact, yet a sufficiently remarkable, proportion to the comparative share which they obtain of the bounties and protecting duties on sugar.

The Bahamas grow no sugar: they consequently enjoy no share of the bounties and protecting duties on that article. The increase of the population of the Bahamas is, however, very considerably greater than in any other colony. It may be estimated at upwards of two and a half per cent. per annum, being about the rate of increase among the Slaves in the United States.

The only other colony of Great Britain in which there is any increase of the Slaves is Barbadoes; and that is the colony (with one exception) which makes the smallest quantity of sugar in proportion to its numbers, and enjoys of course the smallest share of the public money. The *increase* appears to amount to about one and one tenth per cent. in three years, or a little more than one third per cent. per annum. In 1821 the Slave population amounted to about 79,000; but the quantity of sugar which was imported thence into Great Britain in that year amounted only to 180,000 cwt., being at the rate of two cwt. and a quarter for each Slave*. This is the only British Sugar Colony in which there is not an annual decrease of the Slave population; and it will be found that, with one exception, the proportion of sugar which the others produce is far greater than it is in Barbadoes.

St. Christopher's appears to have had a population in 1821 of 20,000 Slaves. Its export of sugar in that year amounted to about 90,000 cwt., being at the rate of four

* On an average of several years, it is nearly three cwt. for each.

cwt. and a half for each Slave. Its rate of *decrease* was about one third per cent. per annum.

The population of Jamaica in 1821 was about 340,000. The sugar exported from it was about 1,770,000 cwt., being at the rate of not quite five cwt. and a quarter per Slave. In this island the *decrease* appears to have been proceeding at the rate of nearly one half per cent. per annum.

The population of St. Vincent's, in 1821, was about 24,450. The quantity of sugar which was imported thence into Great Britain in that year was 216,000 cwt., or nearly eight cwt. and three quarters for each Slave. The *decrease* appears to have been proceeding there at the rate of one and a half per cent. per annum.

The population of Grenada in 1821, was 25,700. The quantity of sugar which was exported thence in that year was 184,500 cwt., or at the rate of upwards of seven cwt. per Slave. The *decrease* appears to have been proceeding there at the rate of two per cent. per annum.

Tobago, in 1821, exported about 109,000 cwt. of sugar. The population in that year was 14,600: its produce therefore was at the rate of seven cwt. and a half of sugar for each Slave, and its *decrease* appears to have been proceeding at the rate of three per cent. per annum.

Between the years 1815 and 1821, Demerara had more than doubled its export of sugar. In the former year, it was only 234,000, cwt.; in the latter, 536,500. In 1824, it had increased to 616,000. The very change to sugar from other articles must have pressed hard upon the Slaves. In 1821, its population was about 77,000. The rate of its production of sugar in that year, therefore, was upwards of seven cwt. for each Slave: and in 1824 it had increased to eight cwt. for each Slave. The rate of *decrease* in Demerara during that period has been about three per cent. per annum.

The rapid extension of the oppressive culture of sugar in the place of other articles not requiring the same intensity of muscular exertion, aided by the inequality of the

sexes which prevails there, has probably quickened the progress of depopulation in Demerara.

If the population returns of the West Indies were perfect, and if we had a regular and accurate account of the transfer of Slaves from one island to another, the above statements would probably undergo some modification. At least, we should be better able to account for the present apparent inequalities in the decrease of those islands.

But with all the supposeable imperfection of these details, is it possible calmly to review them without the most entire conviction of the pernicious effects produced, on the happiness and comfort of the Slaves in the British Colonies, by the bounties and protecting duties on sugar? In the Bahamas, where no sugar is grown, the Slaves increase,—they increase rapidly! In Barbadoes, where the proportion of sugar to the population is least, they increase, though in a small degree. In St. Kitt's and Jamaica, where the proportion of sugar is greater than in Barbadoes, there is a considerable though not so large a decrease as in St. Vincent, Grenada, Tobago, and Demerara, where the proportion of sugar is the largest. There the decrease proceeds at a much more rapid rate; at a rate, in some of them, which would unpeople the earth in half a century.

We have already adverted to the pernicious effects of Slavery in so perverting all the ordinary effects of high prices, that what is a source of benefit to free labourers, increasing their comforts and augmenting their numbers, proves a source of oppression, misery, and death to the Slaves. In like manner, one of the most valuable blessings of a bountiful Providence, the natural fertility of the soil, is converted, by the malign influence of Slavery, into a bitter curse. To what other cause can we attribute it, that, in the poorest colony of the West Indies, that of the Bahamas, and where the quantity of produce exported is the least, the increase of the population should proceed at the rapid rate of two and a half to three per cent. per

uum ; that even in Barbadoes, which is the most impoverished of the Sugar Colonies, there should be an increase of one third per cent. per annum ; and that in Demerara, possessing the richest soil in the West Indies, and where consequently the produce of Slave labour must be the greatest, the population should decrease at the terrific rate of three per cent. per annum ? Can any farther proof be wanting of the position which the Committee undertook to establish ; namely, that high prices of produce are most injurious to the comfort and well-being of the Slave population ; and that therefore the bounties and protecting duties by which a factitious elevation is given to those prices, and even the superior natural fertility of the soil, have a fatal and deadly influence in aggravating their sufferings.

But still it will be argued, that, supposing all this to be true, the abolition of the bounties and protecting duties must issue in the ruin of the planters. If, with all the support which these afford them, they find it scarcely possible to keep themselves from sinking, their utter ruin must be the inevitable consequence of withdrawing that support.

Now, although it is too much to require that the pecuniary interests of 1600 or 1800 sugar planters should be allowed to come into competition with the comfort, the health, the liberty, and the lives of seven or eight hundred thousand human beings, and with the clear interests of the whole community of the British Empire ; and although the facts of the case leave no room for hesitation as to the expediency, nay as to the absolute necessity, of putting an end to this most impolitic, inhuman, and unchristian system ; yet the Committee will not object to meet their opponents, even on this ground.

They have already adverted to the large sum which is paid to the sugar planters, by the people of this country, over and above the fair price of their sugars. It amounts by the operation of the bounty, independently of the protecting duty, to about one million two hundred thousand pounds, or nearly an average of 700*l.* a year to each sugar planter. Now this payment has all the worst characteristics

of a poor's rate. It is compulsory ;—and it is paid to those who most clearly ought to provide for themselves. It therefore may be expected to produce all the injurious effects on the recipients which, when we look around us, we see to flow from ill administered parochial relief in this country. It is, in short, a system of pauperism on a large scale, attended with all the evils of pauperism. Those evils have been stated by a Committee of the House of Commons to be, in the case of the paupers, a want of exertion and self-dependence, recklessness of the future, improvidence, waste, profligacy, &c. &c. ; and, as it respects the public, unceasing and insatiable demands for farther aid. Instead of looking for help to their own industry and economy, and to a reformation in their plans of life, they throw themselves on the eleemosynary bounty of the public. Those who know what has been the state of West-Indian interests, during the last fifty years, will easily see how aptly, and in how many points, the parallel applies. And perhaps, of all the misfortunes which have attended West-Indian speculators, none have been more fatal to their prosperity, and more pregnant with evil, even in a pecuniary point of view, than the success which has attended their clamorous importunity for public aid. They have overlooked, like the sturdy beggar, the means of relief within their own power, in order to draw an easy, though unsatisfactory and precarious provision, from the weakness and credulity of others.

But for this, would it have been possible that the West Indies should have continued in that low and wretched state of improvement which they now exhibit;—that the miserable hoe, raised by the feeble hands of men and women, driven forward by the cartwhip, should still be their only instrument in turning up the soil, to the neglect of cattle and machinery;—that all modern improvements in husbandry should be almost unknown;—that one unvarying course of exhausting crops should be pursued without change or relief;—and that in a climate congenial to them the population should continue progressively and

rapidly to decrease? These and many other points that might be mentioned are fatal anomalies, which can only be accounted for by the withering influence of Slavery and of the factitious aid by which it is upheld in all its unmitigated malignity. How different would have been the state of things in our Colonies, had a different course been pursued! How different would soon be their state, and this is now a far more important consideration, if they were driven to depend on their own resources, and if they were released from the injurious effects of that pampering and protecting system which has hitherto kept them from all effective efforts at improvement!

Such being the deliberate views of the Committee, they hail with satisfaction the intention which has been announced by the Government of so regulating, in the course of the next year, the drawback or bounty on sugar as to reduce, to about one half of its present amount, the advantage which the West Indians now derive from that source. They hail it, however, rather as an indication of a change of policy, than on account of the benefit that will flow from it. While the protecting duty of 10s. per cwt. is continued, the evil of the present system will not be practically lessened. Nothing short of the removal of all protection of the produce of slave labour, against competition with the produce of free labour, can effectually reform it.

But to return to the case of the planters—The Committee have already on various occasions shewn, that if there be truth in history, or any certainty in political science, the downfall of the present system, and of the restrictive laws which maintain it, would prove beneficial to none more than to the Colonists themselves. On this subject, therefore, they can only now repeat in brief their former statements.

Their cultivation of sugar then is at present a forced cultivation, which must ever be a hazardous and expensive process, and can only be supported by a monopoly price, both high and permanent. The first effect of the removal

of restrictions would be, that the colonist would be induced to withdraw from sugar cultivation (which is at once the most exhausting to the soil, and the most oppressive to the Slave of any) his inferior soils, and to employ them in pasture, or in the growth of other articles of a less onerous description. By reserving his best soils only for sugar, its remunerating price would be lowered, and his profits of course raised. But the necessity of the case would force upon him other improvements. He would be obliged to become resident. That curse of the West Indies, a non-resident proprietary, would cease ; the heavy cost of agency would be saved ; the ruinous effect arising from the unfaithfulness and disobedience of agents, frustrating every designed amelioration, would be stopped; the plough and various other articles of machinery would then be brought into use, and would both lessen the expense of culture and lighten the labour of the Slaves. It is quite astonishing that the plough should not have been adopted in the West Indies. This, in common with many other evils of the system, is owing to Slavery. If an English farmer was obliged to keep, during the whole year, all the hands he required for harvest, he too might be tempted to occupy them in turning up the soil with the hoe, instead of employing cattle and machinery in this branch of husbandry. No people pretending to civilization have ever discarded the plough, excepting the colonial slaveholders. Its adoption by them into general use could not fail to produce the most beneficial results. Cattle would be more generally employed. A change of crops, a better system of manuring, and a better system of general management, would follow ; and the soil, instead of gradually deteriorating, as now, would be gradually improved. In his altered circumstances, the planter would feel the necessity of making the culture of provisions, and the raising of cattle and live stock, a principal object of attention. He would feel the necessity also of relieving the women from that constant and oppressive drudgery of field labour which smites them with barrenness and abridges their

lives. He would allow them to pay an adequate share of attention to their children and their domestic concerns. He would introduce a variety of economical and moral improvements, which are obviously practicable, and under the influence of which the West Indies could not fail rapidly to improve. The population would increase; and, as they increased, their condition would gradually approach to that of free labourers. The property of the planter would be no longer estimated by the number of his Slaves, who would sink in value, and whose manumission would become rapidly progressive, but by his land, which, as population multiplied, would proportionably rise in value; and eventually his income might be derived, not from the uncertain results which attend the present unnatural state of things, but from a land rent paid by Black or White farmers managing their own concerns. The West Indies would then be able to compete in the sale of their produce with any other country in the world; and the West-Indian planter would find the improvement of his income to keep pace with the progress of those reforms, which would, at the same time, most effectually promote the happiness, and exalt the moral and social condition of his unhappy bondsmen.

It is vain, however, to expect, that, while the West Indies maintain their monopoly, and are thus protected against the competition of free labour, a single effectual step will be taken in the career of reformation. Other expedients therefore must be resorted to, if Parliament should refuse to abolish the restrictive system; such as the competition of free labour, in every case where it can be employed with sufficient advantage to overcome, by means of increased skill, the protection granted to slave labour;—and the substitution of the use of the produce of free labour for that of slave labour in every case where it can possibly be effected.

But on these various means of prosecuting their object the Committee have already enlarged in their circular address of the 9th of February last, to which they refer the meeting. They observe since that time the formation

of a commercial association, under the name of the Tropical Free-labour Company, the objects of which are in perfect accordance with the views of the Committee, and to which they cannot therefore but wish success.

In the mean time, however, the Slaves are suffering and perishing. The depopulation of our Colonies is proceeding at a rate which can be explained on no principle but that of the severity of their treatment. They still labour under the whip without wages. They are still chattels. They are still not the subjects of law, but of individual caprice. They are still without any civil or political rights. Even their marriages are still unsanctioned and unprotected by any legal recognition. Their evidence is still generally inadmissible. Their manumission is still obstructed : and, even after being made free, they are still liable to be reduced again to Slavery if unable to produce proof of freedom. The master may still sell or transfer them at his pleasure, without any regard to family ties. He alone still regulates the measure of their labour, their food, and their punishment. He may still brand them, whether men or women, in any part of their bodies, with a heated iron ; confine them in the stocks ; load them with chains ; strip them naked, and cartwhip them at his pleasure. He may still deprive them of half their night's rest, and leave them no alternative, with respect to the employment of Sunday, but that of toiling for their subsistence, or carrying their produce to market ; and he may still shut them out from the means of religious instruction. He may thus, and in a variety of other ways, make "their lives bitter with hard bondage."

But we are told, that all this power of inflicting evil, which it cannot be denied is possessed by the colonial master, is not abused. The Slaves, we are told, are the happiest of beings. They are better off, in short, than the English peasant. But, besides the utter absurdity of supposing that power, enjoyed by such persons and under such circumstances as exist in colonial society, should not be abused (for this would be to suppose West Indians to

be angels and not men), we have only to look to the facts of the case as they stand in evidence. The Committee do not now mean to enter into their detail, nor is it necessary: they are too well known to require any renewed specification. To one single fact, however, they will refer; a fact which cannot be questioned, which is quite conclusive, and which therefore supersedes the necessity of adducing any other of those multiplied proofs of the inhumanity of the system that are before the world;—they mean the extraordinary decrease of the Slave population in our colonies. In what way but one can it be accounted for that, while, in all other situations, and in all other circumstances, the African race rapidly increases its numbers; in the Slave colonies of the European powers, and there alone, it should not increase, but on the contrary decrease; and that in our own colonies it should decrease in proportion to the extent of that species of cultivation which we stimulate by our bounties and protecting duties? Is it possible, under these circumstances, that the nation can consent that these restrictions should be continued?

But it will be said, perhaps, that, although the decrease of the Slave population in our colonial possessions cannot be denied, yet we have no reason to suppose that in a state of freedom the Negroes would be better off. "They would neglect," we are told, "all cultivation. They would fall into greater disorders than any which now prevail among them. Their licentiousness would be still more unrestrained. They would be the victims of petty feuds and lawless anarchy: and they would have bitter cause to regret their former state of bondage." But even granting all this to be as true as it might be shewn to be false, yet why, at least, may not our Slaves in the West Indies increase as fast as the Slaves in the United States? There, the *laws* are in their letter even more harsh than in our own islands. Still the system is *practically* so much more mild and humane;—the Slaves, in short, are so much better fed, as well as more leniently treated, that they increase at the rate

of two and a half per cent. per annum ; while, in our colonies, they decrease materially.

If, however, we prefer to institute a comparison of the progress of population among our Slaves with its progress among Africans, or the descendants of Africans, in a state of freedom, we shall find the result equally opprobrious to the British colonial system, and equally confirmatory of its extreme practical harshness. The Committee have already had occasion to mention the rapid augmentation, by natural increase, of the Maroons of Jamaica, and of the free Black and Coloured classes throughout the Colonies ; an augmentation that has been proceeding in the very midst of a Slave population, of their own kind and colour, which has, during the same time, been rapidly diminishing.

The Committee have now a still more conclusive instance to adduce : it is the case of Hayti, the population of which consists exclusively of Blacks, or of the descendants of Blacks. In Hayti, be it observed, there are neither bounties nor protecting duties ; and all its expenses, civil and military, are defrayed from its own resources. Yet what is the history of the population of Hayti ? In 1790, it was estimated at from 450,000 to 500,000, for the French part ; and at from 80,000 to 100,000 for the Spanish part. During the sanguinary Revolution which followed, and the civil wars to which that Revolution gave birth, and above all during the exterminating attack made upon them by Bonaparte, it is supposed, on probable grounds, that the population must have diminished by about 200,000 individuals. Agreeably to this estimate, the population is stated, in the Appendix to Mr. Bryan Edwards's History of the West Indies, (a work deemed authoritative in matters of mere statistical information), to have been reduced, in 1805, to about 400,000. If this account is at all to be relied upon as correct, then, during the twenty years of tranquillity which have since elapsed, has the population of that island augmented with a rapidity to which a parallel is scarcely to be found in any part of the globe. A census of the inhabitants was taken by the Haytian Government

in the course of the last year. The official returns, which are given in detail, exhibit an aggregate population of 985,000, being 535,000 more than it was estimated to be, in 1805, by the editor of Mr. Bryan Edwards's History; or an increase of 133 per cent. in twenty years. The regular troops, kept on foot for the defence of Haytian liberty against French aggression, are stated to be 45,620, and the national guards 113,328. But whatever may have been the inaccuracy in the estimated population of 1805; suppose it to have been 500,000, instead of 400,000; still, the increase is most astonishing, and, when it is compared with the rapid decrease among the Slaves in the neighbouring island of Jamaica, it can only be resolved into the blessing of Freedom on the one hand, and the curse of Slavery on the other.

But then, in reply to all this, it is said, that the Negroes, when they become free, will not work; that the exports from the West Indies will therefore greatly diminish; that all industry and exertion will be at an end; and that they will merge again into the state of savages.

But, to console us under this alarm, let us look again to Hayti. There the Slaves were to the full as depressed as our Slaves now are, and much more ignorant. They have been engaged also in a struggle for liberty through a long protracted period of blood and desolation, of confusion and anarchy. Twenty years of sanguinary conflict of the most barbarizing description, sometimes with foreign, sometimes with domestic enemies, were little calculated to train them to habits of industry, or to the arts of peace. And yet what do we witness in their case? They have contrived, in the period which has since elapsed, at least to maintain themselves without any foreign aid. Though it was necessary, and still unhappily is necessary, to keep a large portion of the ablest and most active labourers under arms, (who are of course sustained by the labour of the rest,) their own exertions have alone ministered to their subsistence, as well as defrayed the entire expenditure of the

State. They have not only abundantly supplied their wants by their own labour, but they have nearly, if not more than, doubled their numbers in twenty years. And while they have done this, they have been advancing in intelligence, respectability, and wealth. Schools have been multiplied among them ; knowledge has been widely diffused ; the arts of civilized life have been cultivated ; the reign of order and law has been established ; security has been given to property ; and industry, having its reward, has been progressively extending its boundaries.

But, in reply to this, we are gravely told that the Haytians export no sugar. This is the dark spot in their condition, for which nothing can compensate in the eye of a colonial partizan. They may live in comfort; they may be well fed and well clothed ; they may multiply their population ; they may be free, powerful, united and happy ; but all this affords no satisfaction since they do not cultivate sugar, and cultivate it in gangs, under the whip, as in the English islands. And, yet, that they labour sufficiently to supply all their reasonable wants is evident from this, that the value of foreign merchandize imported into Hayti in the year 1822, and consumed there (the whole of which must have been paid for by the produce of Haytian labour) amounted, by the official returns of that island, to three millions sterling.

The Committee, before they quit the subject of Hayti, beg to acquaint the Meeting, that a plan is now in progress, which promises to produce the happiest effects, for removing the Black and Coloured population of the United States to that island. About six thousand individuals of this class, being the number to which the experiment of the first year was limited, have eagerly, and without hesitation, embraced the liberal proposals of the Haytian President, and are now settled in that free and fertile region. It is expected that means will soon be adopted for receiving annually a much larger number, and thus opening in Hayti an asylum in which the whole Negro and Coloured population of the United States may at length find liberty and rest.

But supposing the worst anticipations of the West Indians to be realized, and that the exports from the West Indies should diminish in consequence of emancipation—what then? Will that lessen the comfort, or retard the improvement or the increase of the population? The very reverse would be the effect; and as for any deficiency in our imports thence, it will be abundantly supplied at a cheaper rate from other quarters. If, however, proof were wanting of the industry which the emancipated sons of Africa may be expected to exert, we have only to look at the state of the free Black and Coloured population in our own Colonies. They are there a contemned and degraded race, labouring under numerous disabilities which leave them free but in name. Their efforts are cramped and limited by oppressive regulations, and they are excluded from all public employment either civil or military. Let their education, their intelligence, their respectability, their property, be what it may, they are shut out from exercising the most ordinary rights of citizenship, even the right of sitting on juries, or of voting as freeholders. With them the very lowest White disdains to associate, says Mr. Edwards, and " holds it an abomination even to eat bread." And yet, labouring under all these multiplied disabilities and discouragements, "tending," as the same author justly observes, "to degrade them in their own eyes and in the eyes of the community," "to make them at once wretched and useless," "without motives of sufficient energy to engage them either in the service of their country or in profitable labour for their own advantage; their improvement in knowledge being animated by no encouragement, their attachment being received without approbation, and their diligence exerted without reward;" yet, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, what the People of Colour have actually done to surmount them, and to raise themselves in the scale of society, has been in the highest degree creditable to their character and powers, and affords a most encouraging earnest of what may be expected from them under more auspicious circumstances, and when they shall

be admitted to a full participation in the rights of British subjects.

In the island of Trinidad, a full half of the property is said to belong to emancipated Africans or their descendants; and it has never been charged upon them there, that they are deficient in industry and intelligence, or that they do not fulfil the part of good and loyal citizens.

In Grenada, the free Black and Coloured inhabitants are more than three times as numerous as the Whites. Two years ago they petitioned the Assembly for an extension of their civil rights, grounding the claim on their tried loyalty, their patience and good conduct, their intelligence and respectability, the largeness of their property and of their contributions to the revenue of the island, as well as on their importance, as a militia, to its defence and security. In the resolutions adopted by the Assembly, in consequence of this petition, these claims to consideration are fully admitted, and the persons petitioning are declared to be "a respectable, well-behaved class of the community, and possessed of considerable property in the colony."

In Jamaica also, which is now said to contain 40,000 free Black and Coloured inhabitants, a number far exceeding that of the Whites, it is only necessary to call for the tax-rolls, in order to see how largely they contribute to the revenue of the island, and consequently how efficiently their industry must be exerted. They all, at the least, entirely maintain themselves, and many of them are wealthy. And yet, in Jamaica, as in other colonies, they still labour under severe disqualifications, and continue to be a degraded and contemned race. Indeed, scarcely twelve years have passed since, in that island, a free Black or Person of Colour has been allowed to possess or to inherit more than 2000*l.* currency; or to own and navigate a vessel of his own; or to appear as a witness in a cause in which a White person was a party.

There is something peculiarly unjust and cruel in the representations frequently made by the White Colonists respecting the incurable indolence and viciousness of the

free Black and Coloured race. They first load them with disabilities; they exclude them from almost every gainful and honourable pursuit; they sink them down into a low and degraded caste; they banish them from all elevating associations; they pursue them with contempt and ignominy; they deem them unworthy not merely to act as jurors, but till lately to give evidence in courts of justice against a White, a privilege still denied them in some colonies; they use their arts and their influence to seduce their women, and to retain them in a state of lawless prostitution; and, having done all this, they turn round and vilify them as profligate in their conduct, and as destitute of industry, energy, and talent, because, under this accumulated load of oppression, disqualification, and debasement, they are deficient in energy, and do not rise to the highest level of society. But do not these harsh and degrading distinctions speak more strongly and intelligibly than all their vituperative statements and declarations, the real opinion which the dominant Whites entertain of that hated race? If they did not fear its rivalry, why should they evince all this morbid anxiety to prevent the fair and unfettered development of its powers and capacities of improvement?

But the Committee will not dwell longer on these and various other topics which invite remark. They have said enough to convince the Meeting that the labours of the Society are far from being at an end. As yet, in truth, little or nothing has been done beyond enlightening, to a certain degree, the public mind on this subject, and awakening, they trust, the national conscience to a sense of the enormity of the evils they have associated to remove. It remains for the friends of the African race to employ their best endeavours to induce Parliament to redeem its solemn pledge on this subject, by adopting effectual measures for carrying the resolutions of 1823, disregarded and resisted as they have been by the Colonies, into early and full effect. It will also be an important part of their duty to obtain, if possible, the abolition of those fiscal regulations which protect the

produce of Slave labour against the competition of Free labour—regulations which, in fact, render the people of Great Britain the main upholders of this vicious system. And it will be further incumbent on them to aid every scheme, which may hold out a fair prospect of success; for attaining the same desirable end, by bringing the produce of Free labour into competition with that of Slave labour. They will be ready, the Committee doubt not, if necessary, to do still more, and even to make large pecuniary sacrifices to accomplish their great object. Indeed, if we look narrowly into the question of compensation, we shall find it far from being attended with all those formidable and apparently insuperable difficulties with which the exaggerated claims of the West Indians have invested it. Mr. Barham however, who is not likely to undervalue those claims; and who, in some points of view, exceedingly overrates them, estimates the annual net income derived by West-India proprietors, from their property in the West Indies, at 2,100,000*l.* If we suppose this estimate not to be excessive, and value it at sixteen years' purchase, (which, in a country where interest is at six per cent., and property exposed to much comparative hazard, is a high valuation,) it would amount to 33,600,000*l.* At three and a half per cent. this sum would be completely liquidated by a perpetual annuity of 1,176,000*l.*; a sum less than what the nation is now made to pay to the West Indians, in consequence of the mode of regulating the drawback on Sugar, independently of the protecting duties, and exclusive of all other charges, whether civil or military. What we now pay, however, we pay to uphold and aggravate Slavery. A less sum, if Mr. Barham be right in his estimate of the annual income of the Colonies, would be sufficient to buy out the whole system. And even if this were thought too large a step to take at once, yet, by the appropriation of less than a third of what we now pay, we might redeem from their bondage the whole of the female population, and thus extinguish Slavery in a single generation.

It is impossible at present fully to develop these views.

The Committee have touched upon them merely to shew how easy it would be to get rid of this cruel and unchristian system, by means which would involve no pecuniary loss to the country, but rather a gain. And when we extend our views, and consider the benefit which must accrue, from the abolition of the West-Indian monopoly, to the general interests of commerce, both in England and in Ireland, as well as in every other part of the British dominions, we must feel convinced that we should soon have a most ample reward for any seeming sacrifice we might make.

In alluding to this subject, we are naturally led to advert with gratitude to the indefatigable labours and exertions of Mr. Cropper, of Liverpool. A valuable publication of his has recently appeared, which clearly shews the connexion which the abolition of the West-Indian monopoly has with the improvement of the sister kingdom.

The Committee regret that so much of the present session should have passed before the great question of colonial slavery has been fully discussed in Parliament. The delay has been unavoidable. Information was called for, which has been produced, but not yet printed; and the measures of the parliamentary friends of the cause have necessarily and unavoidably been influenced by that circumstance. As soon as the requisite information has been placed in their hands, no time, it is confidently hoped, will be lost in bringing the subject under discussion. This is all that the Committee can now with propriety say on that subject.

The Committee, before they close their Report, would remind the Meeting, and the friends of their cause throughout the kingdom, of the indispensable necessity of funds to the performance of the duties they have undertaken to execute. The diffusion alone of information by means of the press, necessarily occasions a considerable expenditure. The press, however, let it be recollect, is the grand in-

strument of success, because it is the only effectual means of enlightening the public mind. The Committee therefore would most earnestly impress upon the minds of their friends, not only in the metropolis, but throughout the kingdom, that pecuniary aid is essential, if they hope to see their benevolent wishes carried into full effect. They would further press upon them the importance of their exerting themselves, each in his own sphere, to engage the earnest attention and the active co-operation of all whom they can influence, and to diffuse information, by means of the books and tracts of the society, among every class of the community. On the degree in which the public feeling is kept alive on this subject, depends, under God, mainly, if not entirely, the final triumph of our efforts. By labouring to combine the zeal and intelligence of his vicinage into associations for promoting the abolition of slavery, every individual may render a most important service to humanity, and become a concurrent instrument in dispensing unspeakable blessings to millions yet unborn. And surely no man who has a spark of love to his country, and who believes that verily there is a God that judgeth the earth, will refuse to employ his utmost powers in forwarding this great work, and in contributing to raise the wretched Slave from his present state of abject depression, and intellectual and spiritual blindness, to light, liberty, and the hope of the Gospel.

There remains one, and only one other topic with which the Committee will at present occupy the attention of the Meeting. It is of course needless to inform them, that Mr. Wilberforce has retired from public life.—But *on this day*, selected for the promotion of objects to which his powers of mind and body have been for many years devoted;—*in this place*, on the walls of which the music of his tongue still seems to linger, they cannot restrain themselves from pausing, for a moment, on his name—and anticipating the decision which will, in future ages, be pronounced on his merits, by the historian and the phi-

Josopher, by the civilized savage and the liberated slave. To that wise and sober magnanimity, which no object of vulgar ambition could seduce, which no defeats could discourage, which no exertions could weary ;—to that kindness of heart, and gentleness of manner, which disarmed the hatred even of rapacity trembling for its plunder and its power ;—to that eloquence so simple, so graceful, so pathetic, so often victorious in the cause of liberty and mercy, no praise of theirs can give additional celebrity. They are desirous to record, not his services, but their gratitude. May the blessing of God, whose debased and violated image he has protected and vindicated, accompany him to his retreat ! May his declining years be cheered by the affection and respect of an admiring people ! And long, very long, before that melancholy day when his country shall appoint his place among the tombs of her departed statesmen and heroes, and when he himself shall be put in possession of his eternal reward, may he have witnessed the final triumph of the good cause to which his life was consecrated !

N.B. The substance of the Speeches delivered at the General Meeting, together with an Appendix, containing Documents, Notes, and Illustrations, will be added to the above Report, with as little delay as possible.